

Our Time

January 1945

6d.



The Beggar's Opera by Edward J. Dent

The Significance of O'Neill by Michael MacOwan

V. S. Pritchett on Rex Warner

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Our Time

January 1945

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Editor : Edgell Rickword. Asst. Editor : Arnold Rattenbury.

Art : F. D. Klingender. Film : Sidney Cole. Music : H. G. Sear. Theatre : George Raymond.

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Notes and Comments

Peace and the Arts

THE TWELVE MONTHS OF 1945 WILL HOLD more possibilities of good or evil for more generations to come than we dare attempt to reckon. All the power the arts have to tilt the balance towards good must be thrown into the scale. Through our feelings, the arts direct our energies towards creation, towards fuller living. They are the dissolvent of that inertia, expressed in the vulgarity and third-rateness of commercialised existence, which is the only basis on which the forces of destruction can rear their nightmare puppets.

It is true that most of the arts can do their work only slowly, in relation to the life of an individual; that poems and pictures grow into the consciousness of a people and do not violently assault it. For material reasons mainly, since the new poem and picture at present only come gradually to the notice of all but a small minority. It is the peculiarity of film, its historically new quality, that it can be actually seen by the effective majority of a nation in so short a time that their reaction to it can take a political form, as distinct from modifying the social sensibility as all art does. It is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

So it is noteworthy that a year which will, we trust, bring us the responsibilities, if little else, of peace, should open with a film of the life of President Wilson, having as its dramatic climax the Peace Conference of 1919. *Wilson* may be a successor to those admirable breakaways from glamour and dope *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* and *Mission to Moscow* which document, and by implication comment on, current or recent event—its first showing here was too late for it to be reviewed by our film critic till next month. In the meantime, here is a comment on it from the U.S.A. by Joseph Foster, film critic of *New Masses*: "... the ideals for which Wilson fought are presented with great force and clarity. The world moves on, and the limitations of one generation contribute to the understanding of the next.

Thus the importance of an international organisation for maintaining world peace is all the clearer to us for its having first been introduced in Wilson's programme for a democratic future. The need for unity among nations is not lost on the audience which has just witnessed an idealist with a dream for peace get booted around by as venal a set of politicians as ever littered the floors of Congress."

Planning for the Arts

PUBLIC EVENTS CONTINUE TO REMIND US that winning the peace will not be easy and that good intentions must be backed by purpose and power. The way of life that we are fighting for must include leisure devoted in part to the enjoyment, and the making, of art in all its forms—which means that everyone who cares about the arts must think and act now to get results. It is not a question merely of maintaining our own artistic interests and activities: it is a question of the practical moves that will best further widespread artistic initiative in our own town or village. No made-to-measure pattern can be universally applied, but a general plan can be adapted to local requirements: we must strengthen what we have and move on, at the right moment and in the right way, towards what is still lacking. We can all bear in mind such possibilities as: Little theatres and drama groups, orchestras, painters' clubs, writers' circles, discussion circles, W.E.A. and University Extension Courses; and film clubs, which cannot at present make films, can still meet to talk about the films that are showing locally, to demand films that are not coming their way and to plan a civic film centre. Further, we can all press for exhibitions, and especially for the C.E.M.A. exhibition of a model for a proposed centre for the arts in provincial towns: this should be used as the basis for the fullest possible discussion of what a town needs and what it can hope to have. All local planning must plan for the arts and there is a strong case for bringing all the arts together, if not under one roof, into buildings making up a single architectural design.

One of the most important factors in any campaign, however, is communications. It will be increasingly necessary for us all to know what fellow-workers are attempting and achieving, to hear about problems and solutions, and every means of keeping touch should be employed. At the office of OUR TIME we want all the information that we can have about local activities. Our space is limited, but we shall try to mention all developments of general significance and to print letters bearing on local activity. Factual material will mainly be used in these paragraphs. In our correspondence columns the actual response to these activities will be reflected, we hope, and general discussions initiated.

We must urge that unpublished material is by no means wasted: we can form our picture of the country, and assess what is significant, only on the basis of what we hear and know. Will groups and associations please make a note to keep us informed all the year round?

G.H.Q. Books

A VERY GREAT STRENGTHENING OF A national effort is represented by the new policy of the National Book League (formerly Council) which is moving forward on a three-year plan. The aim of the League is not to sell books, but to encourage a better understanding of their uses: to be "a league of readers, of students, of teachers, of all men and women of goodwill towards the arts." The first necessity is for a large and mixed membership, but an equal need is that of support from the "learned and creative minds of our time" (the words are those of the new Director, Mr. John Hadfield); and the services aimed at include the development of the present information service, a very much expanded publication of book lists on special subjects, the building up of a much larger central reference library and a much larger use of the Children's Book Weeks, that have already made their mark. The new League is determined to find a building that can be made a real Centre. This must have its library and reading room, its exhibition room and lecture hall and its refreshment facilities. Here can be organised monthly exhibitions of books that can then be sent on tour to branches and affiliated societies; and here also discussion and debate can be maintained. London is not England, but London is a very convenient centre, in which to begin!

British and Soviet Writers Link

ANOTHER BEGINNING JUST MADE IN LONDON is that of the setting up by the Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R. of a Writers' Group, which has just had its first working meeting with Mr. J. B. Priestley in the chair. The group, which includes writers of all ages and all shades of opinion, is in direct contact with Voks, the U.S.S.R. Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. This meeting tackled the problem of defining the English writer's attitude towards literature. It was recognised that this could best be done through the exchange of opinions and the meeting gathered together a very varied collection of views on general trends, personal aims and the relation of the writer to the society in which he lives. These, translated and sent to Russia, form the first British link in the chain of Anglo-Soviet collaboration in the arts.

Lectures at Unity Theatre

Art education of another kind is going on at London's Unity Theatre, which is having weekly lectures and playreadings. The series, which started with Esther McCracken

On the subject of Playwright and Actor, has included also talks by Miles Malleson, John Burrell, James Agate, Professor H. Levy, Basil Dearden and Sidney Cole.

Perhaps the most immediately productive evening, so far, was Miles Malleson's, for in a talk called *The Need for Left-Wing Plays* he outlined a scheme for the training of playwrights which is now being discussed as a possible development for Unity Theatre. But all the talks have been valuable: John Burrell, after a somewhat modest account of the Old Vic achievements, enlarged upon the whole field of repertory to-day, Professor Levy gave a brilliant, and the only general and aesthetic, talk of the series; and Basil Dean and Sidney Cole spoke of their work in converting Priestley's "They Came to a City" into a film.

Future speakers will include Tyrone Guthrie, Joseph Macleod, Montagu Slater and Ted Willis. Such talks, which bring professionals and amateurs together, are of the utmost importance.

British Drama League Activities

The British Drama League announces a three-day conference, starting on January 11th, to consider the problems of "The Theatre in the Coming World." Many experts in various fields of dramatic activity will speak in sessions devoted to "The Social Responsibility of the Theatre," "The Stage as a Profession," "The Economic Background of the Theatre," "The Outlook for the Dramatist," "Drama in Relation to Education," and "The Future of Amateur Drama."

The meetings, which will be held at No. 1 Grosvenor Place, will be open to the public, but priority tickets are available for League members. An exhibition of "The British Playhouse from Fit-up to National Theatre" organised by the League for this occasion, will be on view at the Royal Academy from January 9th until the 31st.

The future of the drama depends on the bringing forward of new dramatists, and in this connection we are glad to draw attention to the competition being organised by the British Drama League. The competition is confined to entrants between the ages of sixteen and twenty. Particulars can be obtained from 9 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1. Here is a fine opportunity for young talent to express itself.

One other theatre activity calling for special comment is the Colchester Repertory's production of O'Neil's "All God's Chillun Got Wings," which is an ambitious effort carried off remarkably well. The company, which has not yet been able to obtain a proper theatre building, is a non-profit-making Trust with a very fine record of work. For a number of years now it has been providing drama in a town that otherwise has none and in spite of the killing conditions of weekly repertory, with all the other vexations that hinder the living stage, it has done a big job. This theatre intends to go forward after the war and has thought out how to do it.

London provides the Forces with an exhibition in January. The Y.M.C.A., which has been experimenting with art education, announces an exhibition of work by contemporary artists on view at the Services Club, 8 Arundel Street, Strand. This opens on January 1st and continues daily, from ten till nine, until the 27th. Members of the Forces are urged to explore the show; it is a good chance to discuss with your friends what you are looking for in pictures.

The Beggar's Opera

by Edward J. Dent

IT THOUGHT TO BE SUPERFLUOUS TO SAY THAT *The Beggar's Opera* is one of our most famous national classics of the theatre. It is difficult to say whether it is an opera or a play; it undoubtedly belongs to the realm of drama as much as it does to that of music. However, we have the author's word for it that "it must be allowed an opera in all its forms," at any rate according to the standards of its own day. It was first produced in 1728, and throughout the eighteenth century it enjoyed a perpetual popularity. Tate Wilkinson, the famous Yorkshire theatrical manager, writing in 1795, said that it had probably been performed more often than any one play of Shakespeare. It held the stage securely during the first quarter of the nineteenth century too, but after the accession of Queen Victoria its attraction seems to have declined; there was, however, a notable revival in 1878, when Sims Reeves took the part of Macheath.

After that it languished again until 1920, when with a new arrangement of the music, by Frederic Austin, it was brought out at the Lyric, Hammersmith, and ran for over four years continuously—one of the historic runs of the English theatre. More recent revivals have not equalled this success, but *The Beggar's Opera* is now really well known and ought to be sure of a cordial welcome whenever it is put on the stage.

Its origin is probably to be found in a letter of Swift to Pope, although written as far back as 1716, in which he makes fun of pastoral poetry, at this date somewhat fallen from the standards set by Fletcher and Milton; he suggests that Gay, the poet, already known for his satirical farce *The Beggar's Opera* (1715), might like to write a set of Quaker Pastorals, or even pastorals about porters, footmen or (sedan) chairmen. "Or what think you," he goes on, "of a Newgate pastoral, among the whores and thieves there?" It has also been very generally asserted that it was intended as a parody of the fashionable Italian opera then supplied annually by Handel. This is only partly true.

The real problem of *The Beggar's Opera* is the fact that it is firstly a play, and a play dealing entirely with the underworld of its own contemporary London. It is not the first of such plays, but the first that was used for a ballad opera. Historians have also talked of it as if it was the first ballad opera ever put together; that is not true either, and in any case it is difficult to draw a clear line between ballad operas and plays with songs. But *The Beggar's Opera* certainly has more songs than most; there are sixty-nine, including several incomplete fragments of songs. The music for these was taken mostly from a popular collection published a few years before, called *Pills to Purge Melancholy*. A good many are traditional folksongs, mostly Scotch and Irish; others are theatre songs from plays, composed by minor contemporaries of Purcell; and there are also a few songs taken from Purcell himself and from Handel.

The relation of *The Beggar's Opera* to the Italian operas is explained quite clearly in the introduction by the Beggar himself. "This piece was originally writ for the celebrating the marriage of . . . two most excellent ballad-singers. I have introduc'd the similes that are in all your celebrated operas: the *Swallow*, the *Moth*, the *Bee*, the *Ship*, the *Flower*, etc. Besides, I have a prison scene, which the ladies always reckon charmingly pathetic. As to the

parts, I have observed such a nice impartiality to our two ladies, that it is impossible for either of them to take offence. I hope I may be forgiven, that I have not made my opera throughout unnatural, like those in vogue; for I have no recitative."

Throughout the seventeenth century Italian operas had been frequently performed on the occasion of princely marriages in Italy or Germany; the custom of celebrating some royal event with an opera lasted until 1791, when Mozart wrote *La Clemenza di Tito* for a coronation. The similes (*I'm like a skiff on the ocean lost*, and so forth) are the regular characteristic of Italian librettos; the singer had to express his emotions in the song, and the composer often found the simile a convenient occasion for picturesque descriptive music in the orchestra. The prison scene comes into several old Italian operas, when the hero has been unjustly imprisoned by a tyrant. The rivalry of the two lady singers is an obvious allusion to the quarrels of Faustina and Cuzzoni, who actually fought on the stage of the King's Theatre in the Haymarket on the night of June 6th, 1727. Handel had already brought them both on to the stage together in his opera *Alessandro* (1726) and had taken the greatest care to make their parts exactly equal in importance. In *The Beggar's Opera* the plot turns mainly on the rivalry of Polly and Lucy for the affections of Macheath, and their songs are divided between them no less scrupulously than in Handel's opera.

Early in 1941 the management of Sadler's Wells asked me to make a new arrangement of *The Beggar's Opera*, in order that it should become the property of Sadler's Wells and be put into the regular standard repertory. For various reasons, mostly connected with war difficulties, Sadler's Wells has not yet produced this new version, but the management raised no objection to its being tried out at Birmingham this last May by the Clarion Singers, a society of working people conducted by Mrs. George Thomson.

When *The Beggar's Opera* was staged at Hammersmith in 1920, the outstanding attraction was the stage picture contrived by Lovat Fraser, a designer of genius, whose early death was a serious loss to the English theatre. To that stage picture the rest was subsidiary, and admirably contrived in every way to enhance the effect of it. The Victorians had thought the play very shocking, and indeed from the earliest times there had been perpetual discussion of it from the moral point of view. The characters are mostly highwaymen, thieves and women of the town; and since every Italian opera had to have a happy end, Macheath, who has been condemned to be hanged, is reprieved at the last moment. Puritans were horrified at the exhibition of such characters; other serious critics maintained that the play taught a moral.

One thing we can certainly say, and that is that Polly, the heroine, is the incarnation of nothing but goodness and virtue. The worst that could be said of her is that on one occasion she loses her temper, and that only under the greatest provocation. And Polly is not merely virtuous; she is charming as well. By 1920 a certain change had come over public opinion as regards the proprieties; it was only a few very elderly gentlemen who were shocked at the revival of *The Beggar's Opera*—the elderly ladies enjoyed it as much as anybody. Indeed, no one could possibly take offence; everything was so charming, so

quaint and so deliberately unrealistic.

The songs were skilfully elaborated and by the time the show had got well under way most of them were regularly encored; it was—dare one say it?—as hearty as Gilbert and Sullivan, and perhaps more amusing to a modern audience. But it was always entertainment for a well-dressed and well-fed audience: I realised that much later, when I saw the notorious German version called *Die Dreigroschenoper* in Berlin in 1928. That was a very free adaptation of the story, put into modern dress, with entirely new songs, both words and music; but the point of it was that it was addressed not to a smart audience but to one of people who had experienced starvation in their own stomachs.

I cannot think that *The Beggar's Opera* was intended by Gay to appeal only to an enraged proletarian audience; I am sure he meant it for everybody. But it is social satire, and it is not doing justice to Gay if we suppress or minimise the social satire. The language may be old-fashioned now and then, but human nature remains much the same, and what Gay shows us is a crowd of disreputable scoundrels aping the fine manners of the wealthy and aristocratic, and exhibiting precisely the same egotism and disloyalty to friends "when matters require it." There is no difference in conduct between the rich and the poor; the only difference is that the misdeeds of the rich are hushed up and those of the poor are punished by the law. It is obvious that the attitude of "the gang" to their captain Macheath is: "we are just about as loyal to you as you are to us—that and no more."

As a play without music *The Beggar's Opera* would be indeed repulsive; but we can say much the same of a good many standard operas, happy end or no. It is certainly the music which gives its peculiar charm and everlasting freshness to the work, partly from the childlike simplicity of the tunes, and partly because music of any kind always lifts a play on to a different emotional plane.

In making a new version of the music I felt that it would be right to look backward rather than forward; not to modernise the score, but to try to recapture something of the atmosphere of the first performance. At the same time I was determined to avoid pedantry and archaeology; and the choice of orchestra laid down for me by Sadler's Wells made archaeology in fact impossible. But I went back to the original sources, as far as they could be traced; this enabled me to complete some of the fragmentary songs, one of them, as I discovered, a melody of singular tenderness and beauty, composed by one John Barrett, a pupil of Dr. Blow and music-master at Christ's Hospital in the seventeenth century. I came to the conclusion that audiences of those days probably loved their dear old Purcell in the way that audiences to-day love their dear old Sullivan. It was an obvious duty to restore accurately the text of the actual Purcell songs included, and it seemed right to make Purcell rather than Handel the background of the whole opera. The Scotch and Irish songs fitted naturally into this background, because Purcell made use of many himself.

The Hammersmith version enlarged the songs, which are all very short, by framing them with introductory symphonies and dances to follow; and when these were applauded and encored the opera was so much lengthened that a large number of songs had to be cut out altogether. I felt that the songs ought not to be lengthened, but that they should emerge from the spoken dialogue almost without being noticed, like the songs in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*;

and the producer agreed that they should have no more introduction than the absolute minimum necessary to give the singer the note, except for one or two (a song for Polly and another for Lucy) in which the singer might appropriately parody the Handelian operatic manner. By this means we were able at Birmingham to play the whole work, with all the dialogue and all the songs, in under three hours, intervals included.

The prison scene presented a very difficult problem, and no previous arranger seemed to me to have solved it adequately. I thought first of trying to make it into a deliberate parody of Handel's operatic style, but it was impossible. Macheath, it will be remembered, is discovered in "the condemn'd hold"; he sings mere fragments of eight songs, ending with *Greensleeves* complete. He does not speak a single word; between the songs he only drinks, and he drinks more and more, until he is evidently restored to something like his normal cheerfulness and cynicism. It seems

the opera, making all the strings of the orchestra play Corelli's variations, or bits of them, one on the top of another, as Macheath becomes more and more intoxicated. It suggests his excitement, and it also gives the scene some sort of musical structure.

Up to this point the atmosphere of the play has been entirely satirical and cynical, except for the scenes in which Polly appears. Polly is always completely sincere and absolutely devoid of guile. The two girls visit Macheath in the condemned cell, and he does his best to keep up his air of cynical heartlessness. But suddenly the bell of Newgate begins to toll for his execution. All three at once break down completely, and from this point the play is genuine tragedy, and must be taken with the grimmest seriousness.

Gay knew what he was about when he chose for the trio a song by Lewis Ramondin the original words of which are in *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, although they are the last that one would choose for such a purpose. It is a



The Birmingham Clarion Singers in a scene from the *Beggar's Opera*.

obvious that his head is full of old songs, just like Old Merrythought in *The Knight*. And he must have felt the significance of the original words to the tunes while he sang those put into his mouth by Gay.

He starts off with a few bars of that beautiful air by John Barrett that I have already mentioned—it is an expression of regret for past happiness; so I used the whole of Barrett's song as an introduction and made him chime in with it as if in a dream. One song leads to another, the orchestra always hinting at the song to follow, combining one tune with another. When he sings "If thus—a man can die much bolder with brandy," he quotes what is put down in the book as *Joy to great Caesar*. *Joy to great Caesar* comes from a Birthday Ode for William III by Dr. Blow, who set it to the tune known as *Farinelli's Ground*, the theme which also forms the basis of the variations in Corelli's well-known violin sonata. That sonata must have been even better known in *Beggar's Opera* days, for there were several editions of it published in London about that time. So I elaborated the ground bass for this scene in

long story of two murderers who were nanged, but before their execution repented their sins and died with such consolations as religion could afford. It begins thus:—

*All you that must take a leap in the dark,
Remember the fate of Lawson and Clark.*

The two names rather comically suggest a firm of solicitors, music publishers or any other business undertaking; but the poem is completely serious, and the trio in the opera must be taken equally seriously. There must be no doubt in the minds of the audience that Macheath is going to his death. But an Italian opera always had to end happily, especially if, like *The Beggar's Opera*, it had been composed for a wedding; so the Player and the Beggar come, on and at the request of the Player, the Beggar orders the rabble to run and cry a reprieve. "All this we must do," says the Player, "to comply with the taste of the town." To which the Beggar replies, "Had the play remain'd as I at first intended, it would have carried a most excellent moral; 'twould have shown that the lower sort of people have their vices in a degree as well as the rich, and that they are punish'd for them."

Potatoes

by Richard Conway

British patrols have entered Sparesse . . . Extract from the BBC News, October, 1943.

THE ARMoured CAR CAUTIOUSLY CAME to see; and others following until the head of the line had come to the end of the main street, confirmed that the enemy had cleared out. As the morning grew into South Italian floridity, the villagers returned from the outlying farms to see what had been left of their meagre homes. They came back to charred ruins and the insidious odour of death. Such simple ignorant people—Mussolini was to them a name garishly displayed on a wall, a name somehow associated with the peremptory, brutal, fascist injunction: "Credere, Obbedire, Combattere." Many had had sons and husbands. . . .

(Remember the soldier lying twisted into such a queer shape so very alone in the desert near the track? We couldn't understand how he had come to be there, so far from life, blown sand filling the heedless mouth. . . .)

Perhaps his mother was here among these people, or his wife still hoping with the foolish hope of the loved that he would come back. Or no, these people had seen war; it had visited their own homes, and death had sat insolently in the warm of the hearth: they must know there would be no coming back to the seat in the corner.

As much as people could be happy so soon after the bitter experience of the past few days, these people were happy. They were retreading the path from the dead and while their faces turned upward they shone with light. But often they were compelled to look back again to the horror which was behind, to a child lying by the river bank, his body severed by the precise perforations of a machine gun; or to a girl lying in a ditch, her clothes drawn up from her waist covering her face. Many could not be sure that "the Inglesi" had at last come, and children and old women shrank back as the prying cars drew abreast of them. The younger people knew, and clapped and cheered while tears flowed down ravaged faces. They brought gathered figs, hazel nuts, walnuts, apples, amber pomegranates from aprons and pockets, and pressed them upon the soldiers. The soldiers grinned and shook outstretched hands and were quite at home, calling the old women "Granma" and the younger ones "Ducks." The young officer who lead them studied his map with unnecessary care, took supererogatory bearings with his compass and was quite scarlet with embarrassment. He folded his map-case, saying: "We'd better have a meal, I suppose."

Further down the column, the hungry men had fires blazing before the "suppose" was out of his mouth, and discussed breakfast after a disappointing glance into the ration box. Trooper Markham bethought himself of potatoes; he was one who could be relied upon to provide from the countryside, and many chickens foraging omnivorously in his neighbourhood had found violent death and the all-embracing brew-can. There were no chickens left in this village, but fresh potatoes would make an important addition to the

present meal. "How about asking some of these geezers for some spuds?" he asked his N.C.O., and Corporal Wright hastened to air some newly-acquired Italian. He jumped down from the car and approached the people who had gathered round the fire to watch in wonder as the tea bubbled in the pot. He began briskly:

"Avete—voi—" and then tentatively—"di potati?" and to forestall an insincere rejoinder: "io voglio comparare." The man whom he had selected for questioning, thought for a long moment and was puzzled, turning to the others near him. Corporal Wright settled down to the job. "Avete—voi," he repeated, "di potati?" and made a shape with his hands and a semblance of digging the ground. Realisation came to all his auditors so suddenly and so like a shell-burst that Wright thought: "That one wasn't made in Czechoslovakia, anyway." Speech came from them in an ebullient cascade. It was difficult to understand how so much palaver could be made, so much gesture, shoulders raised so high above the ears, over such a simple question. Eventually the man Wright had chosen as spokesman held up his hand for silence. That was sheer temerity, and he was forced to shout in great and eloquent anger before the torrent of noise descended to a pool of murmuring. He turned to Wright and spoke slowly. Many words were familiar to Wright, who could speak French and had spent three tortured years at Horace

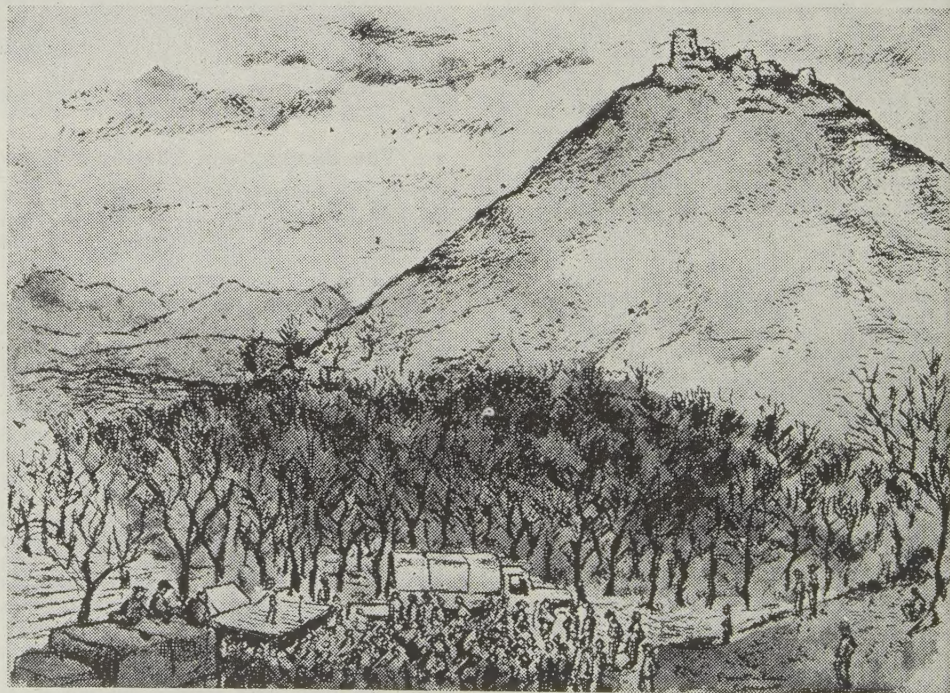
and Caesar. But the meaning was clear because the story had been made familiar by repeated telling all along the line of the British advance.

"... The Germans, the robbers, had taken everything—grain, and vegetables; had killed the beasts and burnt the farms and cottages. They had eaten the best of the food, and left the smallest potatoes and tomatoes and the newest wine. The robbers! They had made camp fires from the beds, and protestants against this treatment had been shot out of hand, regardless of age and sex. . . ."

In the middle of this recital the others had, of course, joined in, and Wright turned to his companions to explain—he knew from previous experience, that the strange language would bring a naive, attentive silence. The Italian touched his arm as he finished his explanation, said "Momento," and hurried to his nearby cottage, returning a little later with a small basket half filled with very small potatoes. His discourse was simple enough to understand: these were all that the Germans had left, but the English could have them with all his heart. His entreaty was strengthened by the woman, apparently his wife, who suckled a baby as she spoke. The soldiers looked at each other in hesitation. "I don't know," Wright said, "they may be all he's got: I don't think we can take them." Markham, strangely, agreed: "Ah, well, if that's his cooloo"—and turned in resignation to the ration box. "Bully bust, again, I reckon."

The meaning of the discussion was obvious to the Italians and they urged more eagerly. The woman, indeed, became so vociferous and excited that her breast swung from the mouth of the somnolent child, and his lusty crying momentarily augmented the uproar. "Please take them—we would give more if we could," and many operative gestures conveyed the impression that "the caporale" could have their very entrails if they were of any possible use.

It looked like deadlock, but the situation was saved by the sudden appearance of a little twisted man, with a grey-bristled face, a weary-looking hat, much-patched trousers, and a waistcoat which hung open over a coarse shirt with an air of patient resignation.



Concert Party in Italy.

Pat Carpenter

At his coming a change came over the faces of the crowd as though he were mad or a drunkard, and when he spoke Wright realised that the attitude of the crowd was due to the fact that this man had not, like all the others in the village, lived there all his life. He came purposefully to Wright.

"What you van?" he asked. "You wanner potato? I gotta plennee gooder wans." (That the "gooder" was intended as the comparative of "good" was made clear by his gesture towards those previously offered.) "You com' with me." He took Wright and Markham by the arm and led them, as he talked, through the crowd. "I gotta fom, jus' by here," he said, "you com' with me, I give you plennee potato." He went on to tell the familiar story of the German depredations, halting frequently as he spoke to be sure that he held his listeners' attention, arms outstretched, and the right shoulder hunched. Markham interrupted him to ask where he had learnt English ("Oh, you flatterer," Wright muttered).

"I bin Yoosay," the old man explained. "Brooklyn, Noojosi, Bosonmass." ("Ah, Boston, Mass," Wright murmured intelligently.) "Yeah, Bosonmass—I bin fofye year. I spika moch." He stopped in his tracks again: "The—Germans," he cried ("Yoosay" had had its edifying influence)—"They tak' evting. Everyday we say, 'Wan d' English com'?" He looked up at the sky. "Jesa Chrise, wan d' English com'?" The tears came to his eyes and his voice was deep with tears he could not shed. "The Germans tak' evting, they keel the bébé, you com', we are so 'appy."

By this time, they had left the main street and had entered upon a track which apparently led to the "fom." Soon the buildings were in sight, and what seemed like a multitude of people—several women with children in their arms, some older children running about barefoot, a young man, and some older women. A good-looking dog came to meet them, was not quite sure of the visitors' status, and faintly beat an appraising tail between legs ready to leap. A woman ran inside the house to fetch some rush-bottomed chairs and a form, and soon three glasses and a bottle of wine appeared on the latter. Their host bade them sit down and spoke to another woman in Italian. He pointed to a handsome slatternly girl who was leaning from a window. "My . . . brud," he said, uncertainly. "No, my . . . gal." "Figlia?" Wright questioned and the old man repeated "figlia" with evident delight at the use of the Italian word. "Figlia—daughter," Wright explained, and the old man said: "Yass, dassa rye, dot." He vouchsafed no information about the standing of the other people: perhaps he thought only the wench interested the soldiers. She smiled, showing white regular teeth, and Markham was interested.

Soon the woman to whom the old man had spoken came from the house with a basket filled with potatoes. They were certainly better than the others, and Markham gratefully poured them into the hessian bag he was carrying. The old man urged them to take more and the woman began to walk back to the house with the empty basket, but Markham held out his hand to stop her, saying, "No, thank you—this is enough," and Wright's hand reached to take his wallet from the pocket of his blouse. No, the Italian would take no money; he would willingly give his all to the English. The Germans—PTOO—(a loud, figurative spit)—the English—no, he would take no money from the English.

Markham took some V's from his pocket and these the old man accepted in token of friendship. (I wish he'd taken the lira,

Markham thought; they're easier to come by.)

"Now have da wine," the Italian offered graciously. Its sourness bore out what they had said—the Germans had taken the best—and Wright was glad that the shrill whistle which came to them from the town gave him sufficient excuse to drink quickly, in a gulp. "We're moving," he said hastily to Markham: "Jillo with the vino," and to the Italian: "We have to go now, signor. No, no more wine, thank you very much. We must hurry." He took the old man's hand and adroitly avoided a garlic laden kiss aimed for his cheek. "Good-bye." He raised his hand and addressed the family: "A riverderci." The man was weeping again, and the others chorussed: "A riverderci," and waved farewell. The soldiers turned and ran all the way back to their car.

The N.C.O. in charge of the car in front shouted an explanation as Markham started his engine. "Going to have a looksee at Davato—infantry's taking over here to-night."

pouring machine-gun bullets upon the terrified inhabitants. "You cheered the English," they said, and automatics chattered and grenades burst redly in the one-roomed cottages where entire families cowered. An old man came uncertainly from his house: "You cheered the English," they said, and cut him in two with their guns. Many old people and children were killed in the dark night that followed the bright day.

They came to the farm and one of them said: "We ought to get some grub here." The young Nazi N.C.O. dragged the trembling man who had lived in "Noojosi" from the barn where he had lain hidden. "We want some food," he said. "Potatoes." He spoke better Italian than Corporal Wright, having lived in friendship with them for a longer time. "I have no more," the old man replied. He was frightened and his jaws felt loose, and his strength spent. "Look, there are very few left." He showed them the large basket in which he had kept them—it contained a few



Italian peasant women
CARPENTER

Italian Peasant Women.

The leading car moved off, and Markham viciously engaged gears—"the old geezer. We duck breakfast again." Wright said: "Waaleesch, we got some vino anyway, and spuds for dinner." "Who said we're gonna have time for dinner, anyway?" Markham wanted to know. He was in bad humour. The column moved slowly through the lines of cheering people and left Sparese to lick its wounds and start life again.

Before the British infantry could make Sparese, a German self-propelling gun (a 105 mm. mounted on a tank chassis) accompanied by protecting lorry-born infantry crept out from the hills and stalked the main street of Sparese warily. When it became obvious that the British had not yet arrived, the infantry dismounted from their trucks, and walked down the street towards the farm, kicking open the doors of the houses, and

small potatoes. "I suppose you've given them to the English, you swine," the Nazi said, and drew his Luger and shot the old man. He fell, his hands grasping the edge of the basket so that it fell with him and the tiny potatoes tumbled out and rolled until they rested in his life-blood.

The next day Markham and Wright ate their supper in a wood near Davato—bully and chips. "Wonder what the old boy's doing now," Markham mused aloud, reminded by the potatoes. "I wonder if he was genuine—he seemed glad to see us."

"I dunno," from Wright. "I don't think he was putting on an act." He chewed his last remaining chip. "Would have given us anything, he said. I don't know, I don't know." He rinsed his mess tin, gathered the potato-peelings and threw them into the fire.

Pat Carpenter

Rex Warner

by V. S. Pritchett

WHEN WE LOOK OUT OF OUR PRESENT prison upon the poetry and prose of the '30's, what general picture comes into the mind? We see, I think, a Green Belt with tabulated mountains beyond, a suburban country cut into segments by the arterial roads, measured by telegraph and pylon; the blue air that lies on it hums like a harp with radio messages and the whine of the internal combustion engine. The new Romantics do not look upon wild nature, but on organised nature; the savage is within the breast.

Up the roads, a speed intoxicated crowd is racing on some phenomenal week-end. Those who do not drive are pedalling heads down, jackets flying, bottoms up; those who do not pedal are walking in bright jumpers or shirts, with their haversacks. It is the day of tourists, climbers, swimmers, campers, scouts, members of hostels. The good and the evil are easily distinguished by the shirts they wear. Muscular agnosticism has replaced muscular Christianity; every act, from the political argument that begins the day to the sex with which it ends, is an exercise. Both make you feel better. And as the urgent holiday makers advance every sight is thrilling. The factory is an exciting abstraction, the machine a wonderful emancipator, the distant mountains point an immediate moral, but most thrilling of all is, of course, the farther horizon. There the holidaymakers, the tourists and hikers foresee the frontier of a new world. The new country of revolution, where the machine is as beautiful as it looks when it is new, where man lies at one with the community, integrated in peace and plenty, as at the breast of a mother.

Who are these travellers towards a new society? A glance shows us one peculiarity of this literature. They are not individual men and women. The satirical critic would suggest that the authors had projected the house spirit of their Public Schools upon the revolution. The individuality of the people has been left at home with their neuroses, their compensations and their working clothes. Like the figures we see in the advertisement posters, they are all types and giants. They are remarkable profiles, turning their best side to the camera; arguments in shorts and adjurations in jumpers. When D. H. Lawrence said that characterisation was played out in the novel, and the time had come for defining people by their sexual type, he was preparing the way for the political and moral types which were to clean up and starch the pages of the novelists of the '30's. It was an exciting moment. The decade had begun to demand types. Types can be drilled. Types can quarrel. Types can reassure. Types can disrupt and fight. We fall into types when we act, and in order to reach that distant frontier, action above all was needed. So, as we sit in our tedious prison looking back at those years, it becomes clear to us: the writers of the '30's may have wished to train us, by rhetoric and catechism, for the revolution. What they actually did was to train us for war. On the frontier lay not the new world, but World War No. 2. It was a remarkable essay in short term prophecy.

Such a scene is the background to the novels of Mr. Rex Warner. Among a mass of 'juvenile satire and the Sunday school stories of social realism, three of his novels stand

apart. He is the only outstanding novelist of ideas whom the decade of ideas produced. He is the only English novelist to make original and imaginative use of the three-cornered struggle between Fascism, Communism and Democracy. A Greek scholar, he brought to this struggle something more than the topical issue; he revived, via Marx, the lost Greek notion of a world driven by myth, by natural force and moral law. As fantasies his stories can be compared with little loss to those of Wells. A far less agile and ebullient, a far more austere and self-conscious figure than the early Wells of *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* or *The War in the Air*, Mr. Warner is no less bold than the master. He is less journalistic in invention; and is,



Rex Warner

indeed, far more inventive in portraying human behaviour. Wells is warmer, but Mr. Warner is less of an egoist. Wells's invention has not surpassed things like Mr. Warner's fantastic hermaphrodite intellectuals who start their love affairs at the end; and the notion, described in *The Wild Goose Chase*, of the elastic football match on the rubber field with the results announced in advance, is a sardonic hell which can stand beside the second half of *The Time Machine*. When we come to Mr. Warner's most mature work, *The Aerodrome*, published in the first year of this war, we are faced by a moral imagination of remarkable power. In his early book *The Wild Goose Chase*, Mr. Warner had the trained frenzy, a touch of the freakish cruelty of the acrobat; in *The Aerodrome* he would be majestic if he were not so argumentative. He owes nothing to Wells, but a great deal to Shaw and Kafka. He is less the fabulist than the dramatist; Mr. Warner's fantasies are the stiffer, more ceremonious, pre-destined rituals of the dramatist.

It is interesting to glance at the ideas of Mr. Warner, and to see how, novel by novel, they have changed. In *The Wild Goose Chase*, the most youthful and spontaneous of his fantasies and the liveliest in invention, we have the simple black and white. You are either a futile bourgeois intellectual, playing at intellectual detachment, aestheticism, etc., etc., and living unaware of the ferocity of the ruling order; or you are a serious, adventurous, properly integrated young Communist. You are moved by a love of life; you are not deluded by appearances. You are aware of the profound crisis that has come to a head in civilisation. A conventional imagination, a more sectarian mind, would have been wrecked by the simplicity of this contrast, as many writers of the '30's were. This satire was published in 1937. By 1938, the moral of Vienna, Spain and Munich had intensified the issue. In *The Professor* we see the failure of the liberal mind deriving its intellectual authority from classical antiquity, when it is bounced off the political stage by one Fascist outrage after another. The liberal will not "arm the workers" and therefore is destroyed by a *coup d'état*. But here a fourth voice intervenes, one that is to become stronger in the succeeding books. It is the voice of the religious man. The old cobbler in *The Professor*, the Communist's father, does not accuse the professor of political ineptitude, but of intellectual error. He has failed to see that the soul of man is damned. Marxism cannot explain epilepsy. There is such a thing as inescapable evil, as hopeless wickedness. The Professor's crime is the refusal to believe in Original Sin.

And then comes *The Aerodrome*, written in the first year of this war. We have left the ideological conflicts of the earlier novels and ascend to the moral plane. This novel is an allegory, immensely of our time, about the profit and loss of a philosophy of power—the modern philosophy. And here we find two interwoven themes. On the one hand, there are the airmen, trained and disciplined for power. They cannot escape death, and it is certain that they will be superseded as the human imagination forces its way ahead. The airmen will, for example, see all their training wasted when the robot takes their place—a good piece of short term prophecy—but they must, as a super-race, be set free of human intimacies and weaknesses. A cynical and virile philosophy enables them to do this. A severe priesthood of technicians in their aerodrome, the airmen are encouraged to behave irresponsibly and brutally in the nearby village. They are encouraged to ridicule the intimate, human affections. But there is another side to this story: the airmen come to envy the backward life of the village. Moreover, in the leader of the aerodrome and his unacknowledged son and daughter, there is hidden a Greek tragedy of sexual entanglement, jealousy and murder. The art of power is perfected at the cost, not only of the art of living, but by the perversion of the sexual instincts and the humane emotions. Mr. Warner is travelling away from his inhuman types and their political generalities towards a more private conception of human life. As a novelist he is on his way back to character. His latest novel *Why Was I Killed?* does away with fantasy and fable, and is a moral inquiry into the real causes of a soldier's death. It is a series of cinematic shots into his own and his family's life, and the religious point of view is now stated at length. This was a topical book, the work of a skilful writer; but it marks a decline from the scarifying invention and vivid incident of his earlier books. Mr. Warner began as a breath-taking acrobat; he has ended, temporarily at least,

as a prosing priest. The truth is that, like other novelists, he has not had time to feel the human tragedy of the war; he has been numbed and can only moralise. One may doubt whether a mind as abstract and satirical as his, can ever succeed in realism. Nor need it try.

The imagination of Mr. Warner is cold, adventurous, exalted, visionary and sensuous. He sees in our society the failure to love completely; and his women are very conscious of the male failure and, at times, of their own. But, one suspects, he is persuaded *intellectually* of this; does he really feel it? One sees him *arguing* that love is the basis of the moral life, but does he *know* that it is? One asks this question simply because Mr. Warner expresses himself with a beguiling and melodious gravity. Like solemn music, his smooth, simple and dilatory prose fills and possesses his subject, so that the mind of the reader is calmed and persuaded. It is strange to find a writer who began under the influence of *Ulysses* and who continued under the influence of Auden's gift for giving general ideas and even conventional phrases, an hieratic visual power, now emerging into a measured and classical prose. It is an exultant prose. It is his own. But it is in danger of becoming free verse and of putting a spell upon the writer as well as on the reader. As I have said earlier, Mr. Warner is a Greek scholar and he has learned much from the direct and modulated clarity of the Greeks. There are moments in his later work when one feels he enjoys the music of his own elegies more than he enjoys his invention. And the effect is, oddly enough, that this bold, poetic, abstract mind and really adventurous imagination is in danger of making a negative impression. It is muffling its drums.

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A Question about Values

Mime and Meaning in the Ballet

by Jack Lindsay

I DO NOT CLAIM ANY OF THE ESOTERIC knowledge that makes up the chatter of the ballet-fan. I simply think that ballet is an extraordinarily interesting art-form, since it goes, of all art-forms, closest to the originating form, the primitive dance; and I had the luck to see quite a lot of the Diaghilev ballet as well as the later developments. And last night I went to the Prince's Theatre and saw *The Gods Go a-Begging*, *The Quest*, and *Miracle in the Gorbals*. Now it is dingy morn, and I am mildly wondering if I am a crank or if I just happen to be simple enough to see reality where too many others see dance-steps and the fixed maenad-smile of the ballet-lovely. And that query raises some other queries, about the mind of the artist and similar confused matters.

First, the *Miracle*. I didn't read all the criticisms about this new ballet by Bliss and Helpmann, but I read enough to get an impression of something a bit phoney and religious-sensationalist. But in fact I found nothing of that sort at all; I found instead an immensely solid-on-earth dance-drama of the most moving kind. The theme is very relevant to our world. It states that the new life can arise only from the people themselves, but that there is a danger that the people, still corrupted with fear and suspicion, may turn on that new life and murder it. The theme may be called unduly pessimist, but its treatment is nowhere phoney; the religious element appears for the convenience of traditional symbolism and merely underlines the social point.

The ballet opens with a magnificent mime-dance rendering of Gorbals slum-life in all its squalor of booze and lust. The Official (representing church and state) keeps intervening vainly on the side of decorum. The Girl who can't bear it moves off to suicide. She drowns, is brought on by the Official amid grievings. Then enters the Stranger (Helpmann), just an ordinary working man, whose resolve and compassion defeat the obstructive Official. The Girl comes to life. Her hands jerk in a tentative return to the reel of free peasant-life. And then the *Miracle* happens. The whole group bursts into the rhythm of the peasant-dance pathetically entangled with bits of jazz. The renewed life which the class-state could not give has been given by the people to themselves. I have seldom seen anything so moving. I don't mind admitting I wept.

The Official, in angry frustration, sinks into corruption (goes to the prostitute). The Stranger goes to her, and the Official whispers the news to the people (accuses the people's leadership of his own vices and corruptions). The people, unaware that the Stranger has converted the prostitute, turn on him, and he is ultimately murdered in a terrific gang-fight of razors and broken bottles.

Now all this seemed to me as plain as the nose on my face—and I have a very plain nose. Yet who else saw it? I had the chance to talk to some factory-workers after, who had seen the ballet; and they hadn't quite seen all this, but they had seen enough of it to find they agreed with me. But what of the critics? What of the public in general? It was all so plain—murder, and love and lust and pity—

plain as such things in a good French film.

During the afternoon I had listened to J. B. Priestley remarking forcibly on the sad deadness of our critics, and thought he maybe over-stated the case; but I fear he was right. Our critics are chosen for their almost total inability to respond to anything basic, anything really burning with the clear energy-lines of art and life. But what about the artists themselves? How much of my remarks would mean anything to Bliss or Helpmann? Am I just seeing things? Or am I right and they'd agree? Or am I right and they wouldn't agree, having worked on intuitional lines that shied away from the direct realisation? I am mainly writing this note in the hopes they'll reply something.

In fact, the whole programme seemed to me one of revolutionary themes. *The Gods Go a-Begging* has the simple folk-theme of Social Transformation, the despised shepherd and servant-girl becoming the gods of life. *The Quest*, with its imagery from *The Faery Queen*, has its theme of Love (or Truth) passing through the ordeal of temptation and deceit, and then regaining innocence for a return into the struggle. But it also has, historically, its political relation to St. George (England) confused between the two queens (Elizabeth and Mary) with the Archimage (the Pope) using the Mary-decoy to draw the Nation back into carnal living, feudalism (the mime of the Seven Deadly Sins). At the end St. George triumphantly regains his puritan purpose and advances away from medievalism into the new world.

So we had the same theme of renewal and transformation at three levels of culture—the Folk, the Renaissance, and the Modern. Answer, Ninette de Valois and Helpmann, is all this accidental? Or am I just distorting things?

And what does the audience get? Before I rush into denouncing them for being as bad as the critics, I had better recall a recent evening at *To-morrow the World*. The audience, of course, giggled at a small-boy making the Nazi salute, as they'd guffaw at cannibals; one expects that lack of realisation. And the laughs seemed to keep on showing a superficial reaction. Some special and talkative idiots were planted behind us. But during the second act one of them began to get the clue, and tentatively, clumsily, but penetratingly started expounding to the others—how the play symbolised what happened to the human soul under Nazidom and how the small boy's tactics in the household were those of fascism in society, etc. I felt rebuked. If one persists with sincere and artistically effective work, one soon (I feel sure) breaks through the resistances and gets the required response from people, if not from the critics.

One last word of thanks for Sadler's Wells, and the way in which, in the face of remonstrances from the critics, they have through the whole of their progress kept on integrating more and more of mime with their ballet-technique. That is, the way they've kept on emphasising meaning. They are picking up the true dance-tradition in a most vital way. Could anything but profound social significances keep emerging from the structure of their art definitions?

Letter to a Young Artist

by S. John Woods

DEAR JAMES,
In writing to tell me you have decided you want to be an artist and to ask my advice on how you should set about it, you set a problem which a whole book wouldn't answer, let alone a letter. You say you have spent several years at art schools and that you don't think you want to do "commercial art" although you realise you may have to do so for a living. To that I would say, "Don't."

The designing of advertisements and posters is important; and still more important is industrial design, providing the objects of our daily use, but I am not touching on that rather special field in this letter. Few commercial artists are interested in art primarily in its application to commerce: usually a commercial artist's real interest is in painting,

but, since he has no means, he earns his living in an advertising agency or similar outfit. He works under a Studio Manager but in the ubiquitous shadow of "The Client," who may be banker, insurance agent, manufacturer, wholesaler, retailer, doctor, pawnbroker, film producer, bookmaker, theatrical sponsor, or any of a thousand things; he may deal in essentials like food or clothing, or he may deal in non-essentials like jewels or patent medicines. Whatever his line, he has to sell in a fiercely competitive market; his advertising has to convince the public that they need his goods or services (which they often don't or, needing, can't afford) and he finds that social snobbery and fear are the readiest incentives. From the advertising agency's point of view "The Client's always right," and, since advertising workers are usually

convinced he's wrong, cynicism is the keynote of the agencies. That's the atmosphere a commercial artist has to work in and it's pretty deadening. Few artists survive, so I say, "Keep out of it." Rather earn your living at something entirely unconnected with art, and paint in what spare time you can find until you can earn your living by painting.

You say your main desire is "to paint." I ask, "To paint what?"

Painting isn't an abstract isolated activity—paintings say something, and, unless you want to say something in paint, your desire to paint is probably a form of escape from the business of living. You must understand that during the last 150 years or so, a fine Edifice has been in course of construction, an Edifice called "Culture."

Artists (and musicians, poets, storytellers, sculptors, etc.) were once artisans, working for the benefit of the community they lived in; as society developed they worked for the Church and, with further developments, for the aristocracy. At first they were just as well known—or just as little known—as builders, smiths, cobblers, tailors and the other artisans. Then, when individual patrons replaced the anonymous patronage of the Church, the artists, too, staked their claim

to individuality, and when the individual patrons of the aristocracy gave way to business men, who worked very hard and did not have the leisure to patronise the arts as the aristocracy had done, the artists found that the new society had no place for them. So they laid still more stress on their individuality and built up this Edifice of "Culture" on a basis of "Genius," and the idea was gradually promulgated that everything that went on in that Edifice was on a higher plane than the work of other men. The builders and the smiths, the cobblers and all the other artisans were ordinary working men on a physical plane of activity (accentuated since many of them had become factory workers with an indirect participation in creation or production) while artists, poets, musicians, etc., were on a spiritual plane of activity—"The Higher Life." The whole Edifice came near to collapse at one moment when too zealous protagonists rechristened it The Ivory Tower. There was a revolt against that, and the artists, poets, writers, etc. genuinely thought they had achieved a sounder basis of work.

But the Edifice of "Culture" had been too firmly established and the ordinary everyday work of ordinary everyday people had become too appallingly dull, the joy had been squeezed out of it, it was a dead, abstracted thing when men and women worked to produce or distribute goods they needed but often couldn't afford, or goods which only a minority of the whole of society could afford, or goods nobody should need like patent medicines or guns; this work had little positive reward: it yielded (if you were lucky) money sufficient to exist on, but the money had its bitterness not only in its insufficiency but in the knowledge that the work was yielding a superfluity for a small minority; and the work itself yielded little joy.

So the Edifice of Culture became a thing apart, where men and women did work they enjoyed, and society—both the powerful few who thrived and to whose interest it was that work should not be joyful, and the majority who could not conceive of work being a wonderful, creative thing—feared and sneered at the men of Culture who enjoyed their work, and thought them immoral and even dangerous; and work itself came to be regarded as a necessarily tedious and unpleasant thing.

And that's still the position to-day. To you it may sound an exaggerated picture, but not only in the Army is the question "Are you happy in your work?" a sarcasm with a firm basis on fact—I think a little thought will convince you that it rightly presumes a sound negative answer in civilian life to-day and before the war and for many, many years back. You may need considerably more thought and quite a little imagination to envisage the possibility of men and women liking, even loving, their work, and you can't think of it in the framework of a capitalist society, for that negates it from the start.

This may seem a long way from answering your question, but it explains how wanting "to paint"—just like that, which is nonsense—motivates so many people to-day without their realising that it is escapism and even with their rating themselves higher than other men and women on account of it. 61,253 pupils were enrolled in art schools in 1938 and of 10,000 professional artists in the pre-war period, only some 730 were able actually to earn a living by the sale of their work.

Let us assume, then, that you don't just want to paint but that you have something you want to say and feel paint is the fittest medium. Now I know you are what is generally termed politically conscious, so I think I can safely assume that what you have to say is some comment on the life around you,



Three Women in a Shelter. 1941,

Henry Moore

Son of a Yorkshire miner, Henry Moore had established himself as an internationally famous sculptor before the war. He has done two series of works for the War Artists' Committee, one in London shelters during the blitz, the other down a coal mine. Probably the finest English sculptor since medieval times, his drawings have tremendous power and are a completely individual interpretation of aspects of the war which have seized the artist's imagination. They are a superb vindication of the War Artists' Committee's policy and a complete answer to any who claim that to ask specific jobs of an artist is to fetter him, to the detriment of his work. If we are to have memorials to this war, I hope Moore will be given an opportunity—preferably in one of our parks, for his work demands the earth and the trees and the wind, rather than a polite town square.

The sort of thing I imagine will interest you will be found wherever men and women are working, particularly where they work to build a better life and to establish a form of society which can provide the basis of a better life. At present your interest will centre on

The sort of thing I imagine will interest you will be found wherever men and women are working, particularly where they work to build a better life and to establish a form of society which can provide the basis of a better life. At present your interest will centre on

So your job is to try to paint subjects of interest to the people in a style they will accept and enjoy and which at the same time will satisfy you as an artist aware of the values of contemporary art.

There is no artists' trade union, but there are organisations such as the Artists' International Association, the War Artists' Committee, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, there are art schools, public galleries—all these are your concern. Since the war many good projects have been started, not only by these organisations but by industrial organisations like the Brewers'

These activities must go on, War Artists must become Peace Artists, not only national monuments and heirlooms must be recorded but the life of the nation. Artists and society must come to terms: both have to make a big move so that the schism is bridged. You're attempting a difficult job in setting out to talk to people, to move them and enrich their lives through paint. I've only sketched in one or two of the problems you are faced with.

Good luck to you.

Films

Shakespeare Screened

HENRY V
Produced by Laurence Olivier (Two Cities Films).

Reviewed by Basil Wright

FEW FILMS ARE MEMORABLE. THIS ONE is. There are two reasons; it is the first really successful attempt to put Shakespeare on the screen, and it is the first film in which technicolor has been used with consistent brilliance and taste, both as regards costumes and settings.

Consider first the problem of screening Shakespeare. It is a commonplace that the stage machinery available to him was extremely limited; but on the other hand his genius was such that even the Schwabe Haseits and cycloramas and multiple stages of to-day would have been equally insufficient. As C. J. Sisson puts it, "It is evident that the Elizabethan theatre . . . could furnish a satisfactory medium even for a dramatist of genius. Shakespeare occasionally calls attention to the deficiencies of the 'unworthy scaffold' of his 'wooden O,' as in *Henry V*. . . . But by no stage could . . . the epic battle of Agincourt be presented 'in its huge and proper life.' It is the medium itself . . . that lacks capacity for such great matters."

Exactly so; and the film producer's great problem is that his medium in no way lacks capacity, for Agincourt or anything else; and, moreover, it can provide visuals for all the poetic imagery with which Shakespeare enriched his dramas. What is the movie-man to do about Gertrude's description of Ophelia's death? He can, if he likes, show Ophelia floating down a real river and singing away like anything. There are some film people, Lord save us, who probably would. But although this is an extreme example, it does indicate the elementary and basic problem which will crop up over and over again in filming Shakespeare.

What Laurence Olivier and his team have done is to face the problem and work out a reasonable style of interpretation which uses the special abilities of film to enhance, and not to swamp, Shakespeare's poetry and Shakespeare's drama.

To begin with, by opening the film with a reproduction of the Globe Theatre in 1600, on the occasion of the play's first night, they not only show us how it was performed in Shakespeare's day, but also find a means of putting across, without undue boredom, the old Archbishop and his dreary "law Salique." (Even so, this scene could with advantage

have been severely pruned.) Next, the transition from the Globe to the full spectacularity of Agincourt is effected by what seems to me to be a brilliant sequence of stylisation, which is gradually modified all the way from cardboard to reality. The skill of this is specially notable in the Southampton-Harfleur sequences—at which point, too, we begin to realise the intelligent use of the Prologue-Chorus. In the play, he is there to stimulate the imagination of the audience—

"Still be kind

And eke out our performance with your mind."

In the film he is, after the opening scene in

and skilfully planned. First the clash of colours—unrelated and a little tawdry, as they should be—in the *Globe*, both on and off the stage. Second, the magnificent homogeneity of design and period in the stylised sequences—pages from the finest illuminated missals come to life; indeed, one of the loveliest single shots I have ever seen is the first slow track-in to the French court. And finally the robust, down-to-earth primary colours of the realistic scenes, where only the technicolor landscape sometimes reminds us of the well-known Californian *cartes-postales*, but is usually swamped by the flags and banners and the caparisoned horses.



English bowmen check enemy armour at Agincourt.

the *Globe*, used first to assist the transition to reality (note where he fades into the cloudy vision of the sailing English fleet), and second, to add, off-screen, those overtones of poetic comment which can produce an element denied to cinema before the coming of sound.

Much has already been written about the Agincourt scenes. They are enormously spectacular—the flight of arrows towards the galloping French is sensational—and I am sure Shakespeare would have been delighted. But the real movie-interest is before the battle starts. It is in the accelerating rhythm from the time Harry gets up from his knees—as the sun rises behind the tents—to his final sweep across the screen on horseback on the words:

"That fought with us upon St. Crispin's day." This sequence is movie as it should be.

Another interpretative advantage which movie can provide is an intimacy of voice seldom attainable on the stage. The scene with the three soldiers, and the subsequent soliloquy, gain enormously in this respect. I think, nevertheless, that audiences will find the soliloquy too long, despite the fact that the visuals are unerringly right—a close-up of the King, his lips motionless, and a discreet shift of camera to profile, with the edge of a cold dawn silhouetting the distant bushes beyond (" . . . sleeps in Elysium: next day, after dawn, doth rise and help Hyperion to his horse. . . .").

Consider next the use of technicolor. This is the first time I have seen it consciously

Then there is the acting. Talent galore and casting so good that it is not worth cataloguing the performances, though Renee Ascherson as Katherine, Roy Emerton, Brian Nissen and Jimmy Hanley as the three soldiers, and Max Adrian as the Dauphin especially, deserve full marks. But the one piece of miscasting should not go unmentioned—Robert Newton, who, as Pistol, carries disingenuousness to a degree hardly permissible in a place of public entertainment.

But so far we have been considering the film from the point of view of people who know and like Shakespeare in any case. What about the many movie-goers who don't know Shakespeare—or who have an active dislike for him arising from the operation of an idiotic and unimaginative educational system?

For a lot of the time I think Shakespeare can stand up for himself. The contemporaneous quality of his dialogue in the French lesson, in the love-scene, and in the three soldiers with their "touch of Harry in the night"—all these are a model of screen dialogue and are hereby commended to the close attention of the Screenwriter's Association. But there are obvious difficulties—the contrasts of verse and prose, and the preciousness of the Frenchmen's dialogue, for instance. And what about Falstaff's death? Here Olivier has taken legitimate liberties. We see the old man on his deathbed, and hear, off-screen, the famous repudiation from *Henry IV, Part 2*. And afterwards we have Mistress Quickly's famous description of his death,

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done in Cockney—and never more moving. But even so—supposing you'd never read or seen *Henry IV*? Incidentally, what on earth is a two-line quote from Marlowe doing in the subsequent scene? Whatever effect was aimed at, it isn't achieved. I should have thought, too, that for a modern audience the Fifth Column plot by Lord Scroop & Co., which is completely cut, would have been more suitable than all the guff about Salic Law. Why, too, was the killing of the French prisoners omitted, as well as the King's challenge to Williams, and its dénouement? These would have been better kept than Burgundy's speech on the plight of France, which, largely because of an unusual uncertainty in the visuals, misses the contemporaneous reference which is obviously intended.

Well, the public will very soon let us know what it feels about *Henry V*. And there's the rub. Will the film make its money? It's said to have cost half a million. And if it doesn't make its money, what then? I feel no doubt that what's on the screen is well worth the expenditure, and that this sort of film ought to be made and made in England. The question is, can Mr. Rank make such films and remain solvent? Supposing this one, and the next, don't make their money? Will he have to withdraw, and say, with the Epilogue to *Henry IV, Part 2*, "I meant, indeed, to pay you with this; which, if, like an ill venture, it come unluckily home, I break, and you, my gentle creditors, lose"? It seems that there is a real risk here—the risk of putting all our economic eggs in one basket. If Rank drops the basket, the smash will be big; indeed, in financing *Henry V*, and turning out a film of the highest order, he has perhaps provided us with the strongest possible argument for direct national participation in the film industry of this country, so as to ensure the making of films of this sort without the dangers of débacle inherent in what Professor Plant loves to call "vertically integrated groups."

Presumably, as regards *Henry V*, a lot depends on overseas distribution, chiefly in the United States. I hope the public there will view it more happily than the two G.I.'s who sat next to me on the bus the other day, and decided not to see it ("enough Shakespeare at high school"), adding a rider to the effect that Thorne Smith was a better bet for the screen. We shall see.

As a postscript, hopeful in tone, let us look forward to the circulation of 16 mm. copies of this film to schools, when the Ministry of Education has got around to providing them with projectors—so that before they open their text books, "all the youth of England are on fire" and get some meaning and feeling out of our neglected national poet.

Something to Forget

A SONG TO REMEMBER

(Columbia Pictures)

Reviewed by H. G. Sear

A HUNDRED AND TWELVE MINUTES OF poppycock, romantic dope. Most film biographies of composers are that. This is the most elaborate lie yet. It is not even dramatically true. The youthful Chopin is discovered playing *Eighteenth Century Drawing Room* "after" Mozart, to the ravishment of his teacher, Prof. Joseph Elsner (Paul Muni), a staunch liar and faithful heart. But the boy turns out to be a techni-Red, forced to fly his country (a bagful of which he carries in his pocket) for refusing to play in the presence of a "Czarist butcher," newly appointed governor of Poland. In any case he was late for the performance, having been at an underground meeting of young Reds with Grandma Joseph Elsner.

Arrived in Paris and shot immediately into Pleyel's piano palace, Elsner and his protégé have nothing but a letter which the former has worn near his heart for a decade, and genius, to recommend them. But wet-nurse Elsner now turns bagman, displaying as much push as Balzac's belly which glorifies the film for a moment; even so, if dear Liszt hadn't happened at that very second to strike up the A flat Polonaise, which Pleyel, alleged publisher, did not recognise, he would have failed. Elsner sweeps in and Chopin joins in, at the left hand octave passage, which is Liszt's cue to exclaim "The Composer," and the pair of them to shake disengaged hands. Introduction to an exquisitely chic Merle Oberon (I beg pardon, Georges Sand, I mean) quickly follows. Introduction to the world; for Liszt, who was to play at the salon of the Duke of Orleans, has the candles removed, substitutes Chopin, and then in the middle of the piece (was it the Moonlight Sonata, since Chopin disliked Beethoven's music?), the Sand, bearing a candlestick, processes to the piano. Sun-burnt ladies weep. Gorgeous coachmen shush louder than the music. After this, Sand sets about weaning Chopin from Elsner, who is left to wash the dirty swaddling clothes in public, since the pair betake themselves to the sumptuously furnished monastery, complete with concert grand, at Majorca. There the Great Novelist keeps a janitorial eye on the Gifted Composer whom she snatched out of the world for his own good. But the revolutionary will keep popping up in him. There is a suspicion that he puts Poland before even

her. But not until after he has composed *So deep is the night*, for her alone. Finally, his sense of honour regained, Chopin sets off on tour, the world's greatest Chopin player, bleeding the aristocracy in aid of Poland. Bleeding himself, too; a goblet of blood on the ivory keys is an irresistible effect. To be candid, the stand-in pianist plays less like Chopin than most. The acting? I have never seen Muni in a comic part before, but he worked very hard. As Chopin and Liszt, Cornel Wilde and Stephen Bekassy were mirrors of each other's admiration. Merle was a minx. The film has its moments of self-abnegation. No angels sing round Chopin's deathbed. He and Merle exchange no kiss of passion. And yet her lips were Red.

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The Past Year — and the Present

by George Raymond

WHEN THE HISTORY OF THE PRESENT great changes in our theatrical ideas and practice is written, the past year will be given an important place. Perhaps even the most important place. For it confirmed and carried forward the promise of 1943's surge of interest in a serious theatre. Without this development our hopes would have been exposed as mere dreams, enthusiast imaginings exaggerating the entertainment hunger of a war-strained public which gobbled voraciously at Turgenev, Ibsen, Shaw and Shakespeare because nothing else was offered, into a desire for such things.

Outstanding in the past twelve months has been the changed attitude towards CEMA. More and more people, both among the public and in the profession, have come to realise that there is nothing wrong with State support for the theatre and very much that is right with it. This does not mean that the opposition to CEMA has been overcome. There are still plenty of vested interests in the theatre who have no concern for it as an art, who will fight tooth and nail to preserve their profits. But it does mean that these retrogressive forces have lost as allies the sincere elements who up to a year ago still held steadfastly to the view that State support or any other pampering of art was bad for it. Practice has proved otherwise.

As the emergence of CEMA has provided the economic foundation for the secure building of our future theatre, so has the appearance in the West End of two first class companies, permanent in structure and with a repertory policy, given us a foretaste of its quality.

To those who have recently taken a serious interest in the theatre it may not be easy to see how really revolutionary is this change from the "long run" principle to the permanent company.

In the old days a business man who wanted to have a gamble bought a piece of "property," a play, another piece of "property," a star actor, and yet a third piece of "property," a theatre, and combined all three in what is known as a production. He did not have to have any interest in the theatre as an art; indeed, he was not expected to have. He maintained the production for as long as it brought substantial profits and as soon as it ceased to do this he threw playwright, star and building back on to the open market. The result was that while there were rich plums there was security for no one. Everyone behaved with the unplanned eagerness of prospectors in a gold rush, each believing that the next second they would discover a nugget. In such an atmosphere art and integrity wither in the bud. A Soviet critic summed it all up by saying, "In England there are no theatres but only theatre buildings."

A permanent company kills this method of misusing the theatre. It gives a measure of security to the actor, ensures continuity of method and so provides the conditions for the development of the theatre to a level hitherto unthinkable. But without a repertory policy, a permanent company is impossible. Repertory ensures that the actor shall have a variety of parts to play and also that plays shall have a fair opportunity. Since, being part of the

repertory, the more popular can help support the less. There is a greater incentive to experiment, since the presentation of a new play under such circumstances is not a gambler's throw with everything staked upon its success.

Outside London there has been a growth of the municipally supported theatre. Most of these, however, still adhere to the limited run rather than to the repertory system. They have a permanent company, but present each play for from one to three weeks. The Citizen's Theatre, in Glasgow, is probably the most remarkable. Despite the fact that Glasgow has always been considered "dead" theatrically, its programme for its first season was of a calibre which would have been considered suicidally utopian for the most solidly established and advanced drama community theatre in the height of the Little Theatre boom of fifteen years ago. Yet the Citizen's Theatre never had to call upon its CEMA guarantee and ended the season with a comfortable profit.

In Swindon there is a municipal theatre which the Corporation actually run themselves. How far this is something to be encouraged depends upon the capacities of the local councillors. For those of us who, before the war, were time after time told that it was quite illegal for local authorities to spend public money on theatre projects, this activity is very encouraging. It proves once again that when the people want a thing they can find ways and means to get it.

The difficulties which face the amateur movement, difficulties necessarily imposed by wartime restrictions, have prevented its development from being anything like so spectacular as what has happened to the professional wing. The British Drama League membership increases month by month, while readers of OUR TIME will be familiar with the rapidly expanding activity of Unity Theatre both in London and the provinces. A year ago we were commending Toynbee Hall for its courage in organising an amateur drama festival. To-day such festivals are being held not only at Toynbee Hall but in dozens of districts throughout the country.

All these things give us a very heartening picture of the theatre as it is to-day, compared with what it used to be. "Compared with what it used to be" are the operative words in that sentence. We have not reached our goal: we have merely brought it within sight.

CEMA has played an important and an essential role in the development of the theatre during the war. It began its task without reserves of experience, without resources or equipment. When the magnitude of the task with which it had to grapple is considered, it is not surprising that the organisation began by seizing piecemeal upon any and every thing that came to hand, tilling virgin ground with all sorts of makeshift tools.

From these uncertain beginnings CEMA has grown to a vastly important organisation indirectly responsible for the employment of a large section of the profession. Yet it is still without a strategic plan. It is still content to wait for suggestions to come to it from outside. It has hung back from taking the

initiative. During the coming year we should look to CEMA to review its whole drama programme with the view to giving it a clearer direction and more specific objectives.

Most important of the problems of the coming year is that at least some move should be made for the solution of the chronic shortage of British playwrights. As our theatre ceases to be a gamble it is, of course, likely to attract more writers. But that in itself is not sufficient.

In the long run it is a matter of our educational system. We need greater attention to the theatre in the curricula of our secondary schools and particularly of our universities. Facilities for teaching drama in the theatre should be more readily available. For too long has it been taken as a branch of literature to be worked on in the study.

In the short run, probably, CEMA could be a great help either through organising competitions or through some form of subsidy. The People's Entertainment Society, having its own special needs, will, I am convinced, have to work out its own methods for breaking down the shortage. And both the Society of West End Managers and The Theatre Manager's Association have an interest in this which should be given a concrete form.

Then the vexed question of training for entrance to the theatrical profession is likely to be very heatedly discussed during the coming twelve months. Presented at its simplest the question is this: "Shall the stage continue to recruit casual labour haphazardly? Or shall a proper apprenticeship be made obligatory?"

The vast majority of people will plump for the latter. Obviously it is the only method which is compatible with the idea of permanent companies. It is not, however, on principles but on methods that the differences arise. Fears of the dangers of craft unionism and doubts about applying any form of exclusiveness to an art, and the problems of obtaining uniformity of teaching are among the chief objections. Most of them, in my view, arise out of the conditions of the pre-war theatre and will not be valid in the new one which is now being created.

Thirty-four years ago Bernard Shaw wrote the *Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, a little agit-prop play in favour of a national theatre. In it he makes Queen Elizabeth say to Shakespeare:

I tell thee, Master Will, it will be three hundred years and more before my subjects learn that man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that cometh from the mouth of those whom God inspires.

To-day the prophecy is fulfilled. The need and the hunger for those "words" is abroad throughout Britain. In 1945 we have to go a little further along the road towards satisfying it.

The Significance of Eugene O'Neill

The Arts Theatre production of Anna Christie reviewed by Michael MacOwan.

THIS REVIVAL WAS WELCOME, NOT ONLY for its own sake, but as a reminder of Eugene O'Neill, and his work. Such a reminder might be particularly useful at this moment, when our own theatre is groping for a way in which it can become a genuine expression of our time.

O'Neill has significance for us; first as a man of the people, with wide sympathy and sensitivity, writing directly out of the emotional impact of his life; secondly, as an experimenter in theatrical form. It is the vigour of his outlook, and the breadth of his experience, which may be the greatest tonic.

Our theatre is now faced with the difficulty that for so many years before the war we had been developing a theatrical attitude of disillusion, bitterness and cynicism, or, alternatively, a polite emptiness, varied by easy sentimentality. After five years of heroic struggle, and rapidly increasing self-confidence, we feel the need of something more robust. But these attitudes have become so habitual in our dramatists, and have so conditioned our theatrical tradition, that the way out is hard to find. Hence the enormous popularity of the classics of more vigorous ages.

Now whatever O'Neill's faults, bitterness, cynicism, disillusion, lack of vitality, and sentimentalism are not among them. Above all he accepts life, he neither glosses it over, nor cries out against it, but gives us his experience direct. It may be the terrifying and tragic experience of *Mourning Becomes Electra*, or *All God's Chillun*; the rough, warm, ridiculous experience of *Anna Christie*; or the hard, coarse animal experience of *Desire Under the Elms*: but it is always virile and courageous, and almost always honest. (One says "almost" because occasionally the experimenter in technique overcomes the instinctive artist and man of the theatre.) Nor is it because he often draws his subject matter from the roughest sides of life that he gives us this feeling of strength, directness, and courage. The characters in *Mourning Becomes Electra*, although of hard New England stock, are mainly cultured and sensitive people. *Strange Interlude* is concerned with ordinary middle class people of our time; and *Welded* with sophisticated artists. In each of these plays there is the same depth, and the same strength. In none of them, except perhaps *Welded*, is there anything that derives from conventional theatre models. All is the recounting of a strong emotional experience of life. It is allied, however, to a fine instinct for theatrical values.

This brings us back to the other special interest O'Neill holds for our theatre at the moment: that of the experimenter in form. It is here that he has succeeded most, and failed most grievously. Had he been wedded to the conventions of the "well made play," he could not have written *Anna Christie* or *All God's Chillun*, so simply and directly. Had he not been ready to experiment we could not have had the tremendous sweep of *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*—the latter a far more formalised piece of writing than the unsuspecting audience guesses. Had he been content to spend more time in consolidating and expanding the ground won by his experiments, the partial achievements of *The Hairy Ape*, and *Emperor Jones*—for example—might have been made

to yield full achievement in other plays. Instead of this O'Neill must be off on a new track—the use of masks for *The Great God Brown*; the combination of poetry and romance with satire in *Marco's Millions*. Each of these has its own value, and also suggests the way to paths other dramatists may explore, and points out the danger spots on those paths. One longs, just the same, to cry, "Wait a bit, wait a bit: you were just getting your hand in, you were on to something. Only stick to it, work a little harder, and more patiently, and this may lead you to a masterpiece." But no, O'Neill is off after another hare.

Besides, a warning, there is an example for our dramatists of the future, in this tendency. The warning is plain. The example too little understood. It is in O'Neill's instinct that each subject can dictate its own form. That form should be an expression of subject matter, and the complex of emotions behind it; the whole governed by theatrical circumstances. In this instinct there is tremendous truth, and our dramatists should study it. Though they should pray at the same time to be delivered from that Irish waywardness that has caused him to waste so much of his genius.

Anna Christie is one of the simplest of O'Neill's plays. Its very simplicity, and apparent crudity of treatment, however, contain a trap both for the audience, and for actors and producer. Many critics have fallen into this trap, and considered the piece artless, its characters overdrawn, and its final scene stupid. The thing is contrived with very great dramatic skill; the characters deeply felt, and the final scene a magnificent expression of their illogical, but rich, humanity. The point is that O'Neill is a poet. He is feeling and expressing these people as a poet. Hence old Chris's refrain "That old devil sea," the one idea in his simple and muddled brain. Hence the emphasis on Mat Burke's childish boasting. Finally, O'Neill's understanding

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that however much Mat may think that he is revolted by Anna's past, it is only his vanity that is hurt, and the instinct of a man for his mate must bring him back to her. These people must not be watched with an analytical mind, they must be felt, and accepted. It is no use saying people should not behave like that, that they are childish, that they repeat themselves, that they argue in circles, and have no self-control—they just exist, and that is all there is to it.

In the Arts Theatre Club production, actors and producer also fell into the trap of thinking the play simpler than it really is. This was a commendably vigorous performance, it had pace, there were no half measures with the emotion, and the audience responded to the vigour of the players. But there was no poetry, and there was no depth. The scene on the barge in fog was most admirably arranged and very effective; but all the brooding strangeness and sense of fate was missed. Perhaps it was that the pace was too hot; Miss Dorothy Reynolds in particular never gave herself time to feel, or let us feel, Anna's changing moods and sensitiveness to the sea, and what was to come to her from it. She gave us the body of Anna, and, often magnificently, her feelings, but not her thoughts or her inwardness. That excellent actor Mr. Herbert Jay, gave a delightful and true picture of old Chris, without making us understand all the twists, the pathos and the childishness of his muddled old mind. Mr. Trevor Howard as Mat Burke succeeded completely in his opening scene, and gave a good performance throughout, but was unable to find the trick of keeping variety through Mat's long outbursts.

Another Revival

ST. MARTIN'S. The Magistrate, by Sir Arthur Pinero.

One of the big successes of the Arts Theatre's Festival of English Comedy a year ago was this revival of *The Magistrate*. Now the company may be seen by the general public.

Mr. Posket, a benevolent magistrate, meets a handsome widow while holidaying abroad and falls in love with her. She has no thought but to make him happy and as a beginning sacrifices five years of her age in order that he should think that he is marrying a younger woman. Complications arise because having done that she is forced to do the same for her nineteen-year-old son, reducing him to the age of fourteen and putting him into an Eton suit. This young man proceeds to make love to the servants, teaches step-father to gamble and finally takes him to a disreputable restaurant which is raided by the police. Mrs. Posket, however, also happens to be there, endeavouring to draw into the conspiracy about her age an old friend of her first husband's whom Mr. Posket has invited to dinner the following day. The magistrate manages to elude the police, but the next day is confronted with his wife in the dock of his court charged with assaulting the police!

The period is magnificently suggested and the company act with a straightforwardness and vitality devoid of any trace of "tongue-in-the-cheek." Mr. Denys Blakelock as Mr. Posket gives the performance of his career. His Magistrate mingles approaching senility with sparkishness, philanthropy with a mean morality, pillared respectability with a jelloid will, behind a portico of Victorian complacency.

If we must have revivals, then let them all be as good as this play by Pinero and as well done as this production.

G.R.

Post

More about "Gorbals"

OUR TIME HAS SHOWN SUCH UNBIASED interest in new and progressive work in other arts that I feel the views of your critic on the new Sadler's Wells ballet, *Miracle in the Gorbals*, should be challenged, since they show complete misunderstanding of the choreographer's intentions and the dramatic lines on which ballet is now developing. I have dealt with this ballet fully elsewhere, but think your readers should be aware of the following facts.

Unlike the ballets of Jooss (the "humanism" of which, much stressed by his disciples, is more stylised than real), "Miracle in the Gorbals" is a first attempt by ballet in this country to use a realistic modern scene and characters as a comment on social conditions and the human callousness they breed. The "reality heightened by translation into terms of the ballet theatre," which your critic (after Haskell) requires, is achieved by the dance itself, which, with its richness of "lifts" and grouping and pirouette, its merging of folk dance and ballet technique, was never seen in any real-life street but on which your reviewer makes no comment. The comparison with the poor lovers in *Jardin Public* (an otherwise undistinguished work) is irrelevant; Helpmann's characters, unlike Massine's, are intentionally realistic and the whole point of his ballet, as in Synge's plays, is not the "heart-rending" but the *heartless* qualities of a certain section of the poor. The pity in this ballet is not for the toughs of our slums, but for the finer spirits they murder in their ignorance.

It is easy for the new young critic to define the essentials of ballet construction, which can be read in any text-book, and echo the "isms" of certain writers; but when your critic states that the theme of this ballet is unsuitable for ballet and that dance, music and décor do not make a whole she does not prove her case. When a ballet moves and excites its audience as this one patently does the choreographer can hardly have failed in his choice of theme or treatment of it. In actual fact this ballet is the result of the closest personal collaboration between choreographer, composer and designer.

Finally, I suggest that when your reviewer questions Helpmann's sincerity she steps beyond the bounds of legitimate criticism. I do not believe any work of art can be created without deep feeling, a motive which your critic seems to consider suspect, and the desire to produce good work can surely be taken as read in any serious artist. If ballet is to rank with its sister arts it must strengthen and widen its dramatic subject matter and face up to human life and character in all its aspects. In this sense the tragedy of *Miracle in the Gorbals* strikes deeper and has a "higher artistic purpose" than the ballroom flirtations of *Carnaval*.

As a critic of some experience, I am convinced Helpmann's ballet is a work not only of courage but of creative power, and a most important step forward in English ballet.

Audrey Williamson.

A Point for Record

IN THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF OUR TIME speaking about the resuscitation of culture from the depths of the blitz period, the editorial admits that only part of the story has been told and hopes "to tell much more of it yet and with enriched understanding." Quite so.

It is very true, as stated, that people who had lost their homes and all their property in the blitz still had heart to sing. But where, with all London's privately-owned theatres and music halls closed? Only the crowded underground and the brave East End taverns first heard the people's undaunted song.

The musical profession, largely displaced and finding the Metropolitan area now practically closed to them, turned to the Musicians' Union for a solution. A Memorandum, which later became famous, was drawn up for presentation to the Government. The M.U., leading the whole theatrical profession, brought sharply to the attention of the government, of every M.P.; and of E.N.S.A., the reality that London was "a land without music." The Union held a memorable meeting (during a raid) when five hundred unemployed professionals showed the Government and E.N.S.A., whose representatives attended, the way forward. From this date the whole musical position was turned.

The Memorandum in so far as it applied to E.N.S.A. was carried out to a remarkable extent. Up to this time N.A.A.F.I. had financed E.N.S.A. for troop entertainments only. Now Ministry of Labour grants poured into E.N.S.A. for the purpose of presenting orchestras and entertainers to the factory workers.

At the moment I have not the data at hand, being somewhere in Britain, yet if I remember rightly, E.N.S.A., which had less than one hundred musicians on its regular weekly pay roll, so extended its activity that within a few months over five hundred musicians were supplying the much needed stimulus to the factory worker and service men. C.E.M.A., too, expanded.

The Memorandum had said "the people cannot come to music, therefore music must go to the people." Thus was music rescued and the war effort undoubtedly assisted.

When the blitz eased a new spirit prevailed. With this revival all the symphony orchestras commenced to flourish as never before, as did also the Ballet and Theatre.

In the same issue of OUR TIME there is a reference under the heading "Music" to "the musical trade unions." Fortunately plurality was eliminated many years ago, so now the profession has the one bona fide trade union, namely, the Musicians' Union.

Alex C. Mitchell, R.A.F.

General Organiser, Musicians' Union.

From the Pinner Orchestra

GRATEFUL AS WE ARE FOR YOUR REFERENCE to us in your November issue, and ill as we can afford to lose any kind of "credit," honesty demands that I should correct one error of fact. You credit us with taking the financial risk of an all-Smetana programme. Actually, we took no risk at all. The whole expense of this concert were guaranteed—and paid—by the Czechoslovak Government. Having decided that Smetana was an unduly neglected composer, and knowing that we just couldn't do anything about it without some financial assistance, we then approached the Czech Government. I am very glad to be able to seize this further opportunity of publicly acknowledging the immense assistance, financial and advisory, we received.

I would like to do similar concerts of Purcell, Vaughan Williams, and Benjamin Britten. Do you think the British Government would guarantee our dead certain losses?

Kenneth Tucker.

[CEMA has the backing of the British Government and amongst its widespread activities is the sponsoring of concerts which have a high artistic and educational value.—
Editor.]

Books

Into Focus

PERSPECTIVE FOR POETRY, by Jack Lindsay. Key Essays Number One. For Publications, 2s.

Reviewed by Alick West

"PERSPECTIVE FOR POETRY" does not prophesy. In Jack Lindsay's words, it aims primarily at getting "this welter of verse and theorising into focus." This focus then gives the perspective.

What is known as the "literary Left" has been trying for a considerable time to get poetry into focus. In this essay there is an important difference from some earlier endeavours.

Previously it was said bluntly that poets, if they are to be saved as poets, must be politically active. For poetry, like all forms of art, is propaganda. Whether he will or no, the poet must always be making a political statement; therefore if he is not conscious of the political issues and is not consciously on the side of Socialism and the workers, he will be so influenced by incessant and insensible bourgeois propaganda that he will be an unwitting propagandist for the bourgeoisie. Capitalism being a fetter on production, and the bourgeoisie being a reactionary class, his poetry will also be reactionary, and therefore bad.

But if the poet is politically active in the struggle for Socialism, his political consciousness will enable him to resist bourgeois ideology and to identify himself with the working class; being on the side of progress, economic, social and cultural, he will be able to write good poetry.

We would have been quite right to say this if we had fully understood what we were saying. But, as it seems to me now, we failed to bring poetry into focus with politics in as far as we were ourselves the victims of the errors we were fighting (I am thinking of the generally current formulations employed in conversation or debate in the five years or so before the war; I wish to make it quite clear that the work of Ralph Fox and Christopher Caudwell is on an incomparably higher level).

We failed because we neglected the process of change in poetry and poets; and we did so because we were not fully aware of what we meant when we said that a poet was a member of society.

We were too ready to take the poet in the ivory tower at his own valuation. He said that he was an individual; using the word in his own meaning, we believed him, and added only that he was an individual continually bombarded by bourgeois propaganda from without. The ivory tower might be celluloid and neither propaganda-proof nor bomb-proof; but there was a tower. We saw the tension between the poet and forces outside him; we failed to see clearly that the struggle was also inside him.

We strenuously denied that any individual could exist in isolation; but we should have been hard put to it to say of what social unit he was a part. If the poet was an "intellectual," we said that he was one of the bourgeois class; but what exactly was the bourgeois class in the later '30's? (The question does not imply that there was not a bourgeois class, but that we were insufficiently aware of its changed and changing character.)

When we spoke of individual and society, we were speaking of them abstractly.

We said that poetry must be political. But what did we mean by political poetry? We denied that we meant the kind of poetry described by Mayakovsky, whom Jack Lindsay quotes—"March, march again, you working men." But what kind of poetry we did mean, we left it to poets like Randall Swingler to show in practice; and we did little to help them.

When we spoke of poetry and politics, we were speaking of them abstractly. And political poetry was the abstraction of abstractions. Our slogans remained words because we did not understand their foundation.

Jack Lindsay grasps the basic fact that an individual is a member of society. The poet never is and never has been enclosed in an ivory tower.

As I see it, the central idea of his essay is that the foundation of all poetry is men's co-operation in production.

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Lindsay stresses that this remains true even under capitalism. Previously we tended to think of capitalism in relation to poetry only as a particular form of exploitation and to identify capitalism with the bourgeoisie; and when we spoke of bourgeois poetry, we classified it as such by those elements that expressed the ideology of the exploiting class. Lindsay's theme is that the development under capitalism of co-operation in production to the point where the material basis for Socialism exists, creates new and closer bonds in society; and that these bonds also demand and find their expression in poetry, however indirect, fantastic or perverted that expression may be.

If poetry must be related even under capitalism not merely to the exploiting class but also to the producing class, the statement that the poet is not an isolated individual but a member of society has a richer meaning than in the earlier abstract formulation. For it now follows that the tension between both the sides in the class struggle is reflected in poetry, however negative may be the attitude to the exploited class.

And if some connection always persists between poetry and its original source in the co-operation of men in production, poetry necessarily expresses in some way the basic movement in society—the development of the methods of production and the consequent development of co-operation in production.

If this is true, the poet is not, as we tended to imagine him, an isolated individual subjected to external social forces. He, as much as anything else, is part of the movement of society; and therefore the contradiction of the movement operates in his mind also. The tension is not only between him and external forces; there is also an internal tension. What speaks through him, is not only his own individuality, but the movement of society of which his individuality is part.

How do these general ideas enable us to focus contemporary poetry?

Here is the outline of Jack Lindsay's picture.

From co-operative activity in the productive sphere there is a "dynamic harmony raying out" with which the artist, to the degree that he is successfully an artist, cannot but be in active union. With the enormous development of co-operation in production in the later phases of capitalism, there came the growth of a new consciousness of human relationships, which the forms of semi-detached suburban Victorian thought, corresponding to a much earlier phase of development and now atrophied, were inadequate to express. Poetry needed a new style, new images, new rhythms to find the answers to new questions.

First, Housman and the later Yeats began to use the diction of the folk-song in a desire "to return to deeper sources of common life." Eliot, in *The Waste Land*, used a fertility myth to express "the structure of society." Then came the three "semi-politicals": Auden, working out "the idea of the isolated individual lost in a breaking world"; Spender, "expressing the entanglement of the individual in history, his sense of an emerging new integration, which was largely defeated"; Day Lewis, "responding to the constructive side of the changes."

Partly because it provided an expression for the revolt of "sensual fulness" against the narrowness of the Audenesque movement, English poets then began to use symbolism and surrealism, both of which carry forward the originally medieval "theory of Correspondences," of mystical unity between forms of life. Of this theory Lindsay says that it is "an intuitional effort to express a sense of relationship, of unions and fusions, of interdependencies and significances, which the

mechanist theories of science could not compass. . . . It proclaimed something essential which the ruling ideology denied. . . . It spoke for the voiceless masses."

In its later development as symbolism and surrealism, poets like Dylan Thomas, Herbert Read and the Apocalyptics use this theory with the similar purpose of grasping at "a fuller sense of process" in themselves and society.

But what lames all these poets from Eliot to the Apocalyptics is their passivity. They oppose themselves to society and see in it the limitation, instead of the realisation, of their freedom. They cannot conceive it as creative, and therefore cannot identify themselves with its creative force. Though they are intensely aware of the new social relationships corresponding to the immense development of co-operation in production, they cannot, in their isolation from the masses, participate in any way in the activity of creating a new society. They are therefore forced to find fetishes and symbols which will serve as substitutes for the social reality whose power they feel but refuse to make their own. "They are," as Caudwell says, "mirror-revolutionaries. They attempt to reach an object in a mirror, only to move further away from the real object."

That is a bare summary of Lindsay's analysis of poetry to-day. Because it holds to the basic fact that a poet is a member of society and that his apparent isolation from society is merely the form in which he likes to think about himself; because it abandons the false conception of a tension between an abstract individual and external forces, and sees the poet's internal tension—for these reasons the analysis is an advance compared with the current generalities of some ten years ago.

Now what is the perspective for poetry? Jack Lindsay says that poets must abandon passivity and intuition, and must think dialectically. It would be absurd to expect a definition of dialectical thinking in poetry, but the style of the pamphlet—the terms used, the implications of the phrases—ought to set the reader's mind on the right track. Too often it does the reverse. Is a poet helped to break his passivity by being told that he has failed "to expand organically with the historical situation?"

Jargon is always suspect. The root of the trouble seems to me a certain sentimentality in the conception of "a dynamic harmony raying out from the productive sphere, from co-operative activity."

But I hope this essay is only a first chapter, and that in another chapter Jack Lindsay will help poetry to conquer its passivity by showing the perspective before the active poets, of whom he is one.

Poetry Soft-boiled

A WORLD WITHIN A WAR, by Herbert Read, Faber & Faber, 6s.

HOME TOWN ELEGY, by G. S. Fraser. Poetry London, 6s.

AGAINST THE LIGHTNING, by Hugh Popham. The Bodley Head, 6s.

THE GATES OF SILENCE, by Wrey Gardiner. Grey Walls Press, 6s.

SEA TALK, by George Bruce. William MacLellan, 6s.

Reviewed by Julian Symons

THE VERSE OF MR. HERBERT READ HAS always been characterised by that sensitiveness of feeling and delicacy of observation which is the groundwork of poetry. Too often in the past such sensitive-

ness and delicacy has been exploited by this poet for its own sake, and as an end in itself; it is pleasant to be able to say that *A World Within a War* contains, unquestionably, the best poems that Mr. Read has written—that is, poems in which Mr. Read's feelings about the war and his own life are translated into moving and sometimes exciting poetry.

There are some good short poems in this book. "Bombing Casualties in Spain," "Herschel Grynsban," "A Song For The Spanish Anarchists," and the melancholy and brilliantly-written "To a Conscript of 1940" should be mentioned particularly. But it is the two long pieces, "Ode Written During the Battle of Dunkirk" and the title poem that make this book memorable. An impressive effect is obtained in the first of these poems by adroit changes of metre, recollections of another war when:

One of the dazed and disinherited

I crawled out of that mess

with two medals and a gift of blood-money.

The whole period between wars, the inadequacy of liberal emotions ("These elements accepted but not guarded/faith formulated but not maintained/twenty years/without design"), the patchwork of normal human egoism and selfishness in capitalist society is sketched lightly but skilfully. All this makes a background against which Dunkirk is seen as a form of just retribution; we learn from the catastrophe that we must exclude "the unreal power of symbols/the false shelter of institutions" and "we must have faith in the children of the nations." One need not agree with the sentiments to appreciate the persuasiveness and skill with which the story is told. The long meditative poem which gives the book its title is equally skilful and moving, full of fine phrases and images. This poem, like several others, expresses a masochist view of life with disturbing frankness:

There is a grace that fills the dying eye

With pity for the wielder of the axe.

Or in another poem: "To fight without hope is to fight with grace." There is a certain softness about Mr. Read's poetry which makes it finally unsatisfying. The feminine receptiveness and passivity shown in his work is a possible tone of poetry, certainly: it is not the tone of the finest poetry.

The other poets under review, except Mr. Bruce, are equally soft-boiled, as it were. They express the viewpoint of people who *have things done to them*: and this gives a certain inertness and weakness to their verse. Mr. Fraser is the most talented of them; his lines run with an ease which promises something good in a year or two. At present his poems can be read with pleasure—but still, they are frequently superficial, and they generally lack vigour. "Birthday Greeting" (to Hitler) contains some good lines:

Love, that the poet figures as a lily,

A towering lily, a receptive rose,

Hardens for you to one tall factory-chimney

Whose war-mad furnace roars without repose.

"A Letter to Anne Ridler" and "A Letter to Nicholas Moore" are perhaps the two poems in which Mr. Fraser's facility is best controlled; and these are poems which improve on a second or third reading. There is a piece on Rostov which opens impressively ("That year they fought in the snow/On the enormous plain, the rivulets/Thick with the yellow thaw"); and altogether, there are enough good things for one to be able to say that Mr. Fraser wrongs himself in his last poem:

Though all my girls are married, though my verse

Has pretty steadily been growing worse.

Mr. Fraser need not worry about his verse: though it would be nice if it were a little

tougher.

Mr. Popham's poems are full of juvenilia, abstractions, loose phrases:

the loveliest of all we had to give—

the ecstasy that seemed a kind of death.

We have read about that ecstasy before. The long twenty page poem which closes the book gives promise of something better; written on H.M.S. *Illustrious* it does convey (one feels) some of the peculiarities of life on an aircraft-carrier. There are a few striking phrases—"values, like sea-birds, hover about a ship," and:

Life is too simple, war too deeply vile:

You should not know the enemy you kill.

A flaccid rhetoric, a misty dreaminess, hangs over Mr. Gardiner's verse. "Love" is the key to many of his poems:

Tired roots in the shifting earth of love (p. 22)

Love is the light of a log fire (p. 38)

Linger miserably hoping for the turn of love (p. 46)

Love has been all my light,

My song unending (p. 54)

Notice how far this "love" is from the touch of reality, from the concrete phrase that conveys the actual. Notice, reader, and beware.

One turns with pleasure to the roughness of *Sea Talk*. There is really some sea talk in this book:

Blue rocks nose above the sand about your feet,

Feet expert and attentive to the ship's swing.

Your hands like women's in their dexterity,

Never fumble needle or net, rope or wheel.

There is a sharpness and liveliness in this verse (I hope it is shown in the four lines I have quoted—certainly it shows up clearly in the whole book), which is not present in any of the other poetry under review. Unfortunately Mr. Bruce has still not very much skill in putting his words together; he is crude and awkward, his constructions are often ugly and too near to prose. "He put the fingers of his glove to his flat nose, snorted and then spat. Short work was made of our Tom Scott." Where would you put the line-endings? But in spite of his crudeness and ugliness in phrasing, Mr. Bruce is worth reading.

A Hero of Our Time

ONCE A JOLLY SWAGMAN, by Montagu Slater. *The Bodley Head, 7s. 6d.*

Reviewed by *Rex Warner*

THE HERO (AND HE IS MEANT TO BE A HERO) of Montagu Slater's novel is assumed to be writing the events of his life in a German prisoner of war camp. This device of the author's is, indeed, of little importance in itself, but it serves to indicate a kind of resting place or pause between what is known of the past and what is hoped of the future. And the desire that the break with the past should be a clean one is not confined to Bill Fox, the speedway ace, who is the hero of this book. It is felt by millions all over Europe in different and often conflicting ways. Bill Fox is represented as a natural leader of men, not a politician or a theorist, but an average man with more nerve than most, the hero of sporting crowds. His final conclusion ("We've lived in a world of death-wishing. . . . And now there's going to be a world of life-wishing") is worth examining, as is also the way by which he reaches it.

Montagu Slater's presentation of his theme may appear to be straightforward, easy and realistic. In some senses of the words it is; but it is also extremely skilful. It is important to remember that the writer who appears to be sticking to the normal and obvious, is not necessarily doing anything of the kind. No

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writer, however "realistic," can present more than a selection of the facts that concern his characters; and the selection made of the facts relevant to Bill Fox is made not carelessly, nor automatically, but with a view to the general design. The facts and the style in which they are recorded (the two form a unity) are tough facts and a tough style.

It is a method rather reminiscent of Hemingway; but in Hemingway one feels often a kind of delight in toughness for its own sake, something which amounts to an affectation of toughness. One does not feel this about Montagu Slater's story. The mechanical toughness of his hero in the beginning is designed to be moulded by the pressure of events into something which possesses a fuller and finer individuality, through his becoming aware both of the events themselves and of other people. In a way the novel is an illustration of the theme "freedom is the recognition of necessity," but it is by no means a barren tract or a piece of eloquent sermonising. It is in the first place, as a novel should be, a story.

I have only mentioned what seems to me the structure of thought on which the story is supported because it is cunningly enough concealed to escape a hasty view; and this again is as it should be. Bad novels seem to be of two kinds: either stories in the air, unsupported by a consistent moral conviction or intuition, or the sermonising, political, moral, sexual, or what you will, which uses a story as a clergyman employs a text. In *Once a Jolly Swagman* Montagu Slater seems to me to have been very successful in writing a vivid story which intelligently interprets experience.

Bill Fox, the boy from Kentish Town, is from the start an individualist. He is somewhat of a disappointment to his mother who works for left-wing causes, and, though he admires his brother when he returns with the International Brigade from Spain, he cannot understand why he went there. His real achievement is his nerve and his real life is in dirt-track racing. Yet he is not shown as a miracle or prodigy, though he is certainly a hero. His early experiences on the speedways, before he becomes an ace, are delightfully and vividly recorded. So are his love affairs, his gradual drifting further and further away from his family, the whole world and organisation of the racing business. Yet in spite of his toughness he is being changed by events.

When at the height of his fame he begins, almost it seems by accident, to organise a union among speedway riders. The result is that he loses his job and his reputation. Then comes a period of more fame as a rider on the Wall of Death, a smash and retirement to what his wife wishes to be respectable life in the suburbs. He finds the respectability and suburbanity intensely disgusting and welcomes the war and army life as a way out. In the army he begins to think, and, as a prisoner of war, records his thoughts.

The end of the book seems to me less brilliant and convincing than the beginning. This is perhaps a result of the method employed. Throughout the book one feels that Bill Fox is acting rather than talking, though in fact he is telling his own story. He does not argue. As he says himself, "I always associate the big decisions of my life with seemingly unconnected things. While working a pump, or getting off an escalator, or pulling a plug, you know all at once that everything is changed, and without wanting to you've had it."

That is what he is like and consequently it is a formidable task to make him articulate about the reasons for a change in his outlook. It is perhaps ungrateful to suggest that this

task has not been done perfectly, but one is only led to complain of a slight failure here because of the great success and precision of the rest of the book.

Something Fresh

THE MALACHITE CASKET, Tales from the Urals, by Pavel Bazhov. Hutchinson, 9s.

NEW SHORT STORIES, 1944, edited by John Singer. Maclellan, 7s. 6d.

THE WATER MUSIC AND OTHER STORIES, by Glyn Jones. Routledge, 8s. 6d.

SELECTED WRITING, edited by Reginald Moore. Nicholson & Watson, 2s. 6d.

NEW WRITING AND DAYLIGHT, edited by John Lehmann. Hogarth Press, 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by Peter Gunn

AFTER READING THESE THREE BOOKS AND thinking back over what's between their covers, three seem to stand out—two for their freshness and one for its beautiful language.

Pavel Bazhov's stories, *The Malachite Casket*, is one of the fresh ones. A tale from this, *The Manager's Bootssoles* was printed in November's OUR TIME, and is a fair sample of the vitality that's throughout the book. It's not the kind of a book you give to a young writer with the words "Write like this," for the thing is too individual, could only have been produced where a living folk-tradition and a bitter history are still close to the author's mind—a book, in fact, like *Grimm's Fairy Tales* that only happens once in a lifetime. I find it impossible to describe the kick and life and humour of it: the blurb-writer tried and failed; most reviews I have read have tried

and failed. Leave it at this, that if you have any humanity in you you must have liked *The Manager's Bootssoles*, and if you liked it you must read the rest.

The other fresh one is John Singer's collection—and the freshness comes from his choice of contributors, only a half-dozen of whose work do I remember ever reading elsewhere. Of course, John Singer took a risk; some of these writers do not come off at all. There's a lot of over-slick imitation and a lot of uncontrolled sentimentality. But some are very good; and there's a good deal of excitement about a book whose next page might be anything; and all of these writers, as Singer's introduction suggests, do most certainly love life and write about it. None of them has yet discovered the aggravating ability to write about one particular fraction of life in one particular way: therefore none are serving up the same joint as last time in a new disguise. I got a lot out of it, even if most of the cooks are learners.

Strangely, the book whose beautiful language I referred to above, Glyn Jones's *The Water Music*, has much in common with Pavel Bazhov's writing. It isn't only that both have a pleasant, unstressed dialect quality about them. (Alan Moray Williams, who translates Bazhov, has avoided throughout the tendency to underline a dialect and reduce it to the level of "the quaint.") It is something more important, I think: that Wales is the only large part of these islands to preserve a genuine native folk tradition. At any rate, the whole scheme of lightning-judgments from the sky, of black, black villainy, of whitest innocence, of coincidence, comes over so vividly in these stories that you believe in them, as you believe in Bazhov's Mistress of the Copper Mountain and his Snake. But where, for Bazhov, the essential fun of his own tale carries him along with an unconscious artistry, for Glyn Jones story-telling is a more deliberate activity. He holds these stories together with the most delicate or forceful images I have read in months. "The shore-pool with its darn of groundwind" or "... There was no meat on his bones and the loose folds and wrinkles of skin draped under his eyes and over his cheek-bones were caught back like window-curtains each side of his toothless mouth, and his long neck was thin and skinny like the neck of a cock turkey."

Reginald Moore's *Selected Writing*, previous numbers of which many of you will have read, is good value for the modest half-crown it costs; and this time seems better still. J. Maclaren Ross, Rhys Davies, Fred Urquhart, Frank O'Connor, Sean O'Faolain and Alun Lewis contribute the best short stories. But the most important feature is the arrival of a Poetry section edited by Tambimuttu. As the book is obviously designed largely for book-stall sales, and in view of its low price, it would be interesting to know how its public responds to the poetry Tambimuttu has selected. I would have thought that, with the exception of Ruthven Todd's fine poem, *Life's Exile*, most of what is here was over-difficult. It was a courageous thing to try out a section like this, but until Mr. Moore or Tambimuttu can give us some indication of its success, I would not like to say how wise a thing.

The most interesting and lucid feature of John Lehmann's autumn number of *New Writing* and *Daylight* is Harold Acton's article on *The Chinese Popular Theatre*. There is also a very good story by V. S. Pritchett, a little grotesque and in the tradition of Dickens and Wells. A rather large portion of the book is given to articles about, and one article by, the young Greek poet and critic Demetrios Capetanakis, who died recently.

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